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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, April 9, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "GREENS FOR SUPPER." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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April showers do more than bring May flowers. They also make spring greens grow the ranker and more tender.

You've probably been having greens often the last week or so. The other day a friend of mine invited me in for a corn-bread and mixed greens supper. And that supper just hit the spot. I decided then and there that today's talk would be about greens.

If greens are nicely cooked and flavored they are hard to beat. I'll tell you how this friend of mine does her greens so that everyone eats them and calls for more.

In the first place she gets some nippy kinds of greens to go in with her milder flavored varieties. For instance, she likes a little dandelion or field cress worked in with spinach.

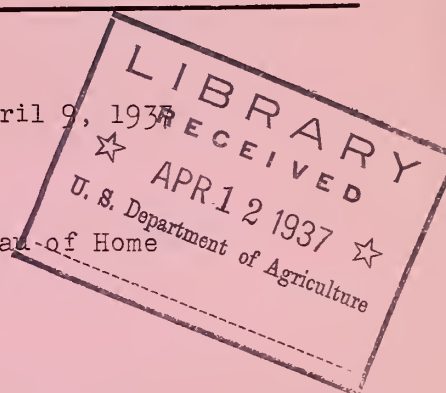
And she says that timing is the most important element in cooking greens. The longer you have greens exposed to heat the more vitamins you destroy and the more of that cheerful green color you change into a drab brown.

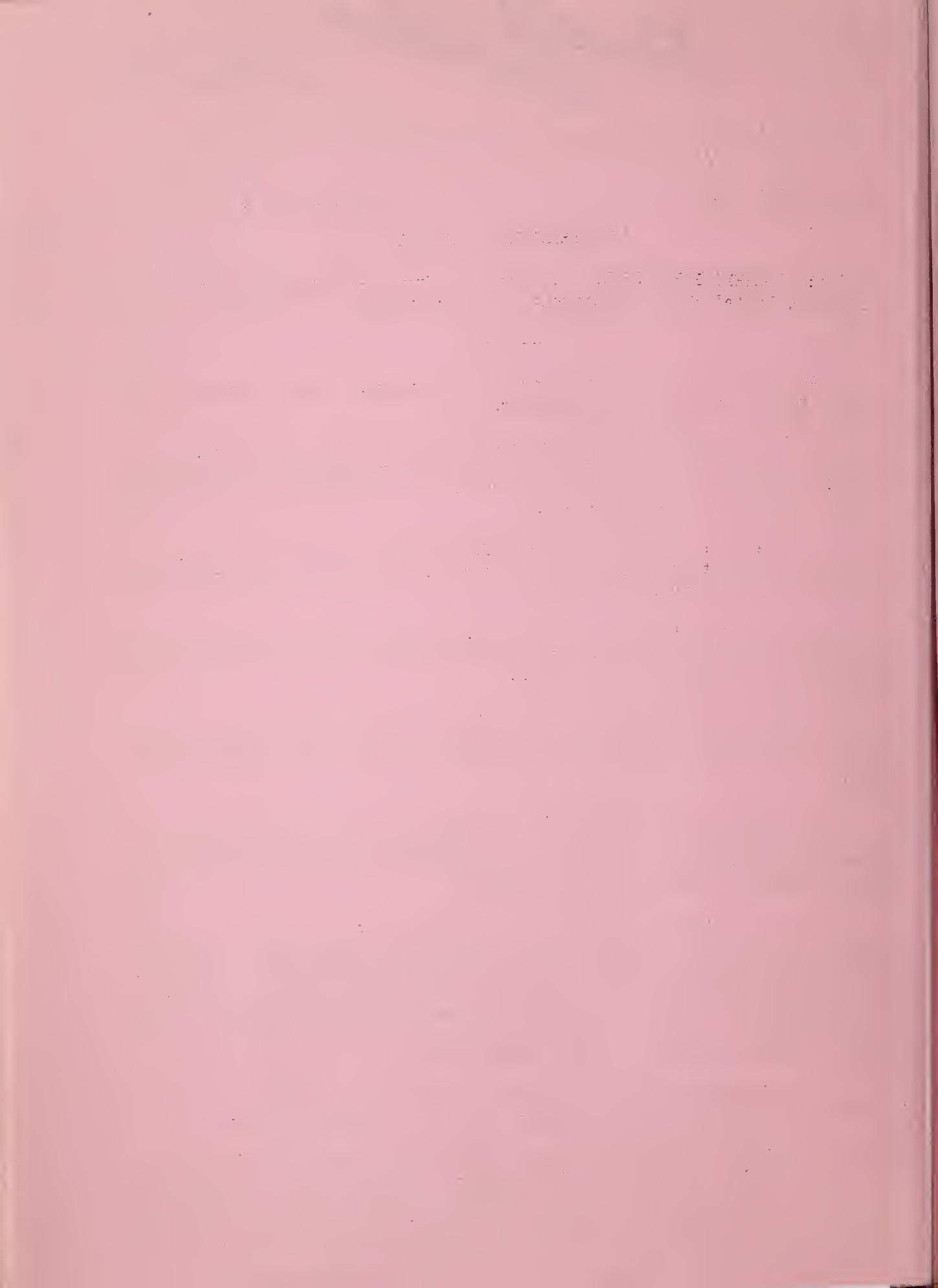
She snips off the stems of the spinach so as to cut the cooking period for the leaves to a minimum. If those stems are rather woody she throws them away. But if they are fairly tender she starts them to cooking about 2 minutes before she adds the leaves.

She uses for the cooking only what water still clings to the spinach after she washes it. She says that so many of the vitamins and minerals dissolve in water that they'd be lost if she used a large amount of liquid. Yet I know some women who cook their greens in a gallon or two of water! Then they drain the water off before they serve the greens. About all their poor families get is some roughage! A large share of the nutrients of the greens go down the drain with the cooking water.

Of course this friend of mine who prepares such delicious greens uses an uncovered kettle for their cooking. That's to keep them green.

You know it's the acid in plant leaves that makes them turn such an ugly brown shade. While plants are growing, the acids in them are bound up in tissues so that they can't harm the green coloring matter. But just let heat get at the leaf and it freed those acids. And the acids at once attack the green coloring matter of the leaf and change it to dingy brown.

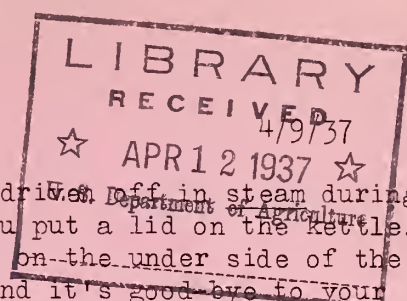




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Fortunately some of those plant acids are driven off in steam during the first few minutes of cooking. But suppose you put a lid on the kettle. Then those acids collect in the drops of moisture on the under side of the lid and fall back again onto the green leaves. And it's good-bye to your bright green color. That's why home economists always say: Cook greens in an uncovered kettle.

Another point in this friend's handling of greens is in her seasoning. Sometimes she just uses butter -- about one and a half tablespoons to four average servings. But more often it's a bacon fat and vinegar dressing with bits of fried bacon added.

And here's an interesting thing. She adds the vinegar after the greens are removed from the stove. Just before she turns them into the serving dish. Of course the reason is that she doesn't want acid on the leaves any longer than necessary. She wants her greens to stay green. And the acid in vinegar is just as much a curse to green coloring matter as the plant acids were.

The pleasing flavor of greens the way my friend cooks them is partly due to their texture. She doesn't cook the leaves a minute after they've reached the wilted stage. They still have just a hint of firmness left in them when they get to the table.

This friend of mine then has 5 rules for cooking those delicious greens of hers. First: Cook them in an uncovered kettle. Second: Use only what water clings to the leaves from the washings. Third: Cook stems first or discard them. Fourth: Cook the leaves only until they are wilted. Fifth: Add vinegar after the cooking.

As we have hinted, greens are valuable because of their minerals and vitamins. They have a liberal amount of both calcium and iron. And those two minerals are the ones scientists say we Americans are likely to get too little of. Greens are also excellent sources of vitamins A and C. And they are pretty good for vitamins B and G. THE GREENER THE LEAFY VEGETABLE, THE MORE IRON AND VITAMIN A IT HAS. For instance, leaf lettuce is better than head lettuce. And turnip tops and dandelion greens are much more nutritious than head lettuce.

You say "greens" to some people and the only plant they think of is spinach. But scientists report that beet and turnip tops have even more calcium and iron than spinach does -- and practically the same vitamin content. So do mustard greens and chard..

So if your young son has a dislike for spinach there's no point in taking up arms for it!. Just shrug your shoulders and serve some other greens!

Well, time's up. And all I've been able to pass on to you is the technique of cooking spinach so as to conserve its color and its nutrients.

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